(c) The naxal affected States have been sanctioned India Reserve (IR) battalions to strengthen security apparatus at their level as also to enable them to provide gainful employment to the youth, particularly in the naxal areas. The initial cost of raising of !R Bns (Rs. 20.75 crore per Bn) is borne by the Central Government.

(d) The overall naxal situation in the country continues to be an area of serious concern. Till the end of June this year, while the number of naxal incidents declined by 12%, the resultant deaths increased by 16%.

Scrapping of Official Secrets Act, 1923

209. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Administrative Reforms Commission has recommended scrapping of the Official Secrets Act and inclusion of some of its safeguards in the National Security Act: and

(b) if so, whether Government have accepted the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Necessary action has been initiated to process this recommendation.

Custodial deaths

210. SHRIMATI S.G INDIRA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to Amnesty International's annual report, the number of custodial deaths is increasing every year in India;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what are the steps being taken by Government to prevent custodial deaths;

(d) whether Government are considering to bring in any legislation to arrest custodial deaths; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) and (b) Amnesty International is an International NGO based in London and is one among the many NGOs based outside India which bring out reports on alleged human rights violations, from time to time, all over the world including India. The methods used by such organizations to gather information have often been questioned, particularly as they are not free from bias. It is not the policy of the Government to react to such reports by International NGOs on internal matters of India.

(c) to (e) The NHRC has issued guidelines to all State Governments/ Union Territories to inform the Commission of incidents of custodial death within 24 hours of its occurrence. The Commission recommends disciplinary/departmental action as well as initiation of prosecution against the delinquent police officials in case where *prima-facie* case of custodial violence is established. The NHRC also recommends monetary compensation to the next of kin of deceased. Further the NHRC from time to time, while disposing off cases of custodial deaths, makes appropriate recommendation to the State authorities to prevent recurrence of such custodial deaths in future. Section 176 of The Criminal Procedure Code has also been amended *vide* the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act, 2005 to provide that in the case of death or disappearance of a person or rape of a woman while in the custody of the police, there shall be a mandatory judicial inquiry and in case of death, examination of the dead body shall be conducted within twenty four hours of death.

Panels for tackling Kashmir problem

211. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister during his visit to Jammu and Kashmir in May last, formed five panels to tackle various aspects relating to the Kashmir problem;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the action so far taken by each of the said panels;